Blues Man (cont'd.)

minute I heard the voice I jumped up and said "Who is it?" He said it was a 17-year-old minister's daughter from Detroit. It took about two months to locate her, but I finally found her and signed her. We recorded her first song, "Today I Sing the Blues" back in 1960 when she was just 18.

Columbine: What did Aretha have that sparked you back then?

Hammond: She had everything. She was one hell of a piano player. She had soul. She had suffered. She came from a wild background. She was in her father's traveling gospel show from the age of seven, and she'd worked with people like Sam Cooke, who sang in her father's choir. She knew every trick in show business. Her father was also a great showman. Her mother was a good friend of Mahalia Jackson, one of the great gospel singers. So Aretha had it all the way down the line.

Columbine: How would you class Aretha? Is she as important as some of the singers from the '30s?

Hammond: Oh, sure. She is unique.

Columbine: In the past 10 years the biggest change in the music industry has been the growth of rock. How have these years in the business been for you?

Hammond: Well, (laugh) I've survived.

Columbine: In spite of it?

Hammond: No, I think perhaps because of it. Rhythm & Blues – Soul – is really just an outgrowth of the blues that I've always loved. So I had no problem adjusting there. I mean, I'm no bubble gum kid, but I was a BB King and Muddy Waters fan a long way back.

Then there were the Beatles, the Rolling Stones. They all helped make blues important in the lives of a whole new generation.

Columbine: Who is an artist you've felt excited about "finding" in the last year or so?

Hammond: Well . . . there's Loudon Wainwright.

Columbine: How did you find him?

Hammond: His manager, Milt Kramer, came to me and said "John, you've got to give me 45 seconds to listen to this tape. You're either going to love or hate this guy, and if you're not sold on him in 45 seconds, I'll understand and take him somewhere else." After 20 seconds I said, "OK."

Columbine: How do you make a decision like that?

Hammond: It's just instinct. But I guess there are a whole lot of judgments behind that instinct. Is the guy original? Do his songs have passion? Humor? Is he a damn good musician besides? All these things.

Columbine: Anyone else?

Hammond: Well, this young kid, Bruce Springsteen. His first album, "Greetings from Asbury Park," got some wonderful reviews. It didn't sell particularly well, but he's a great artist-writer and he's going to sell.

Columbine: How did you first hear him?

Hammond: A very snotty young man came in to see me and said "You're the man who is supposed to have discovered Bob Dylan, and I want to see if you really have ears." Meanwhile, this shy kid with him sat down in the corner. I said to the manager, "You'd better slow down or you're going to have me hating him before I hear him."

So then I started talking to Bruce, and he got out his guitar and started playing. I was enchanted. I'd scheduled the meeting for 10 minutes but Bruce stayed and played for two hours. A couple of days later we were in the studio and cut a dozen songs.

Columbine: You certainly don't sound like you're easing off toward retirement.

Hammond: Me? Oh no. I suppose I'll have to retire in a few years – that "age65" business – but I suspect that even then I'll still be hanging around.

Columbine: Are there any special projects you're involved in?

Hammond: At least 50 million.

Columbine: I mean any "pet" ones, any personal ones?

Hammond: Yes. I would like eventually to do a special on the history of black show business. Start with the "Shuffle Along" and go right up to the "Black Birds" through "Connie's Hot Chocolates," to James P. Johnson's "De Organizer" . . . just cover a whale of a lot of things. You know a guy like Gershwin was probably more influenced by Johnson than by anyone else.

Columbine: Could you comment, philosophically, on why you feel it is important to re-issue the old jazz music?

Hammond: I feel it's particularly important to preserve jazz because it is probably as individual an artistic heritage as we have got. This is America's own. I think it's wonderful if we can make it possible for people to listen to the roots of the music we've got today – of music they're enjoying today.

But to me, it's just as important to make available the historical records we have of, say, Pablo Casals from 1911. You know, Columbia Records were first made in 1889. There is a fantastic musical heritage collected on Columbia Records.

Happily, Goddard Lieberson feels this way too. I guess Goddard is about the only head of a record company who is a musician and composer. So he has a real appreciation of the cultural importance of the records we've got sitting in our warehouse.

Columbine: How will those recordings sound to buyers who've gotten used to stereo – and pretty soon, quad?

Hammond: Well, you know there are mono records that have as much fidelity to the artist's sound as the most complicated quad record. I did a lot of recording with bands like Claude Thornhill, Basie and Goodman back in the '40s. That was 30 years ago, and I would stack the appeal of those records up against anything they're doing today.

Those records were great because we had the band in a natural set-up in the studio. Without isolation. Without 30 microphones open in the studio. And the guys would play just the way they'd play in a regular performance.

Today, in the recording studio, electronics can work miracles that produce what we think of as quality. But those old Goodman records – because there were no electronic gimmicks – had a spontaneous, natural sound that modern recording just can't ever duplicate.

Camping by Computer— and Other Sports Tidbits

Pick-ups from CBS Publications.

"A camper can now buy tickets for his favorite campground as he would for a Dodgers' game or a Broadway play," reported Steve Netherby in a recent issue of *Field & Stream.* There are nearly a thousand computer terminals on both the east and west coasts, with the campsite information and reservation system accessible through many department stores and sporting goods dealers. All you have to do is fill out a form listing your campground preferences, length of visit, type of equipment being used, and the number of people to be accommodated. A computer printout will either confirm reservations or suggest an alternate site.

* * *

Americans devote more hours to leisure than to anything else except eating and sleeping, or so says the Department of the Interior. They also predict that by 1980 there will be over 10 billion sporting occasions – everything from parachute jumps to sailing regattas – and 17 billion by the year 2000. Despite our inflationary woes, Americans are expected to spend over $50 billion annually for recreational products and services by 1975.

* * *

Although backpacking has rapidly become a popular outdoor family sport, hiking shoes for women are still hard to find. *Field & Stream* suggests that a mail-order house is your best bet if you can't find shoes. Boots eight inches high should prevent skinned shins.

* * *

All myths to the contrary, you're safer in the woods than crossing the street or driving on the local freeway these days. Dairy bulls and park bears (they've lost their fear of man) should be your greatest concern. Virtually every poisonous snake you come across will beat a hasty retreat if you give it a chance.

* * *

Julie Heldman, women's tennis pro and *World Tennis* contributing editor, commenting on the match in which, in 100-degree heat, she brought an end to Billie Jean King's winning streak of 14 matches at Forest Hills: "She had to surrender. Conditioning is all part of it. I didn't want Billie to die on the court . . . "

* * *

Every tennis player is taught to punch a volley, never stroke it. "Strokes will sail the ball straight out of play," say the coaches. But tell that to Don Budge or Rod Laver, who rack up points by ignoring the traditional wisdom. Predicts *World Tennis:* "In 5 years, we may see the stroke volley as part of every good tennis player's repertoire."

* * *

Question: Is it best to serve first if you win the toss? Answer: Only if you are warmed up well, are a strong fast starter, and have a good serve. Choose to receive if factors run the other way for you. The point is not to strain your arm by serving hard before you're fully warmed up.

* * *

Striped Bass Department: Under a new Department of Fish and Game program to improve ocean sport-fishing, 20,000 year-old striped bass will be stocked in Southern California coastal waters in 1974. But along the Atlantic, warns *Field & Stream,* stripers could face extinction from the Storm King pumped-storage plant planned for the Hudson – the major spawning spot for all East Coast striped-bass fishing.

* * *

California's Department of Navigation and Ocean Development is offering an informative four-page leaflet on the safe use of small boats while hunting or fishing. To get a copy of *Boating Safety Hints for Hunters & Fishermen* write: DNOD, Room 1336, 1416 Ninth Street, Sacramento, California 95814.

* * *

Can't afford a boat of your own? How about taking a second-hand bathtub, attaching a couple of pontoons, and rigging it out with a 6 h.p. outboard motor? Two hundred such bathtub-boats funnelled across the Strait of Georgia to Vancouver, B.C. during this year's Greater Vancouver Sea Festival.

* * *

Some cold facts helpful for driving your pick-up or four-wheel drive wagon in the snow: Let down tire pressure one-third from full for added traction with little risk of damage to the tires.

* * *

Wheel freaks, test your I.Q. 1- The most motorcycles are owned by a) the Hell's Angels; b) Steve McQueen; c) the New York City Police Department; d) the Shriners? 2- The first car to win the Indianapolis 500 back in 1911 was a a) Delage; b) Marmon; c) Peugeot; d) Mercedes? Improbable answers: Shriners, big on wearing fezzes and helping crippled children, also own thousands of motorcycles . . . and the racing team of Harroun and Patschke won the first Indy 500 in a Marmon.

Winning the first Indy 500.

All appearances aside, WCBS News Correspondent Chris Borgen – emerging from a Harlem bank with hands high – was not a culprit, but the hero in this showdown.

Nabbing Grandma and Other Chilling Exploits

By Bob Hummerstone

Few reporters have lived the high drama and adventure that WCBS-TV's Chris Borgen has. And one would think that, after his 20 years as a reporter, policeman and even secret agent, there would be little left that could arouse the veteran newsman's enthusiasm. Yet recently, when the phone on his desk in the station's Manhattan newsroom rang, Borgen was as exultant as a cub reporter with his first scoop.

"No kidding," he exclaimed, scribbling furiously on a pad. "They got 'Grandma'? Terrific." The call was from the New York Police Department, which had just captured a notorious 64-year-old confidence woman who was the leader of a phoney-check ring that included both her daughter and her granddaughter. The capture had been aided by a tip phoned in to police detectives by a viewer of Borgen's twice-weekly broadcast feature, "Police File," shown on both The Six O'Clock Report and the 11:00 PM Channel 2 Newsroom.

On "Police File," Borgen narrates the reenactment of a crime and asks viewers to call a special police phone number if they can offer any leads. Grandma's was the 9th arrest chalked up by the series since it began last June. In its short lifetime the feature has already received numerous commendations from police and civic leaders, and Borgen himself most recently received the 1973 Citizens' Award from The Society of Professional Investigators for his "superb work" in aiding law enforcement.

For Borgen, 41, "Police File" is a natural outgrowth of his event-filled career. With WCBS-TV since 1966, Borgen is a former New York City police detective whose courage in that job earned him 19 citations for bravery. He covered the Algerian war as a correspondent, infiltrated Cuba as an anti-Castro agent before the Bay of Pigs invasion and, in 1970, helped negotiate the end of a prison riot in New York City's "Tombs."

Last April, Borgen gained nationwide attention and praise when he walked unarmed into a Harlem bank and negotiated the release of 40 hostages and the surrender of two gunmen inside.

Borgen is a spare, intense person who talks in the breathless staccato of a man in a hurry. Eschewing flamboyance, he has relied on a combination of courage and hard work to earn himself a reputation as one of New York's leading crime reporters. A native of the French Caribbean Islands, Borgen was brought to New York at the age of 9 and grew up in Manhattan. After an uneventful stint in the Air Force as a map-reader, he obtained a scholarship to Columbia University, but quit after a year for lack of money and joined the police department.

He was just 21, but "I looked 16, weighed only 145 pounds, and the captain couldn't believe I was a cop," recounts Borgen. Because he looked too young to walk a beat, Borgen was assigned to be an undercover agent on two cases – homicide and narcotics – that detectives had been unable to solve. Borgen solved them and quickly earned his detective's badge.

Much of his work after that was done in jail, where he would pose as a prisoner to get inside information on crimes. He spent a total of 14 months in jail – the longest stretch being four months. It was a dangerous assignment. Not even the guards knew he was a cop, and discovery by a prisoner might easily have meant death. Borgen recalls that each day when the prisoners were let out of their cells into the open recreation block, he faced the fear of being recognized by some newly arrived prisoner. "You never know who's going to remember you. The authorities can get you out of the place in 12 hours. But it only takes 10 seconds for someone to kill you."

In 1960, Borgen was called back to active duty. He was given an assignment to infiltrate Castro's Cuba prior to the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion, for which the chief operations officer was "The Yugoslav" – otherwise known as E. Howard Hunt. Posing as a sailor from Trinidad who had jumped ship, Borgen was supposed to help anti-Castro students disrupt communications and transportation in Havana during the invasion. When the invasion went awry, Borgen and a comrade had to flee for their lives, and when the bus they were riding on was stopped at a roadblock outside Havana, the pair fled on foot in a hail of bullets. Borgen was hit in the left leg and grazed on the left side, but managed to cover 30 miles overland in five days and then, in a small sailboat, crossed 40 miles of open water to Haiti and safety.

Borgen's ability to operate in such a variety of situations is partly due to his amazing facility for languages. His native language is French, and he has a working knowledge of six others, besides English. As a policeman, he moved with ease not only in black and Hispanic communities, where he was accepted as a native, but also in the Mafia. "I spoke Italian better than some of them did," he chuckles. "They used to call me 'Crazy Frenchie.' "

With a sparse knowledge of Polish, Borgen drew the attention of Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin on one of Kosygin's visits to New York and was granted six exclusive interviews. Borgen attempted Arabic during an interview with Jordan's King Hussein, impressing the King enough so that, several years later, while moving through a crowd of dignitaries, Hussein spotted Borgen and hailed him with a "Hello, Chris."

Borgen had always wanted to be a writer. "I have an attic full of short stories," he says, "bad short stories that I thought were great when I wrote them in high school." While a detective, he worked on two books as a consultant – one on narcotics, the other on prostitution. When, in 1960, Walter Cronkite read the narcotics book, he suggested Borgen be hired as a consultant for a "20th Century" narcotics documentary, which eventually won a Peabody Award. His interest in journalism aroused, Borgen took a job with a French television network in 1961, and was soon in Algeria reporting on that war. In 1964, the Cronkite news called Borgen back to work on a mini-documentary on drugs, for which Borgen followed the trail of marijuana from Mexico to New York, and filmed heroin sales taking place in front of New York City high schools. After news jobs at several New York radio stations, Borgen was hired by WCBS-TV in 1966 and named a correspondent in 1969.

At Channel 2, Borgen has continued his penchant for risk-taking. In 1971, he reported on the resurgence of Ku Klux Klan activity in parts of New Jersey from inside a Klan meeting, where he was led blindfolded by shotgun-bearing members. His report won an Emmy Award. His toughest test of courage came, however, last April. Three gunmen had held up a branch of the Chase-Manhattan Bank in Harlem, and in a shoot-out with police as they attempted to escape, one was killed. The other two retreated back inside, where they were holding 40 bank employees and customers hostage. The gunmen indicated they were willing to give up, but were afraid to do so because of the heavy police armaments trained on them. They asked that Borgen and a detective come into the bank unarmed to arrange the surrender. When Borgen entered, not knowing what to expect, one of the armed men told him: "I trust you! I know you're honest."

After several tense minutes, Borgen arranged for the men to release the hostages and surrender, without another shot being fired, and walked out of the bank with the men. New York Mayor John Lindsay hailed Borgen's "extraordinary courage" in the incident, and Police Commissioner Donald Cawley added that Borgen, "aware of the imminent danger, performed magnificently."

Though he resists being typecast as a police reporter, Borgen is now recognized as an authority on police problems. A Ford Foundation official recently sought his suggestions on how the Foundation's money could be used to combat street crime. Despite his years on the force, Borgen warned that relying on the police department alone would not do the job. Citizens have to get involved too. "If people leave the crime problem solely to police, it will just lead to more bureaucracy, and the police will assume an inordinate amount of power," Borgen said. "Police are only human beings, after all."

Now married and the father of a 4-year-old son, Borgen has no intention of slowing his frenetic pace in the immediate future. "I might like to write fulltime someday," he says, alluding to those unpublished stories in his attic. "But not for a while. I find what I'm doing right now too fascinating."

Bob Hummerstone, a former Assistant Editor of Life Magazine, is currently Manager of Editorial Services, Corporate Information.

Kaleidoscope

Corporate Happenings

CBS has announced a 1973 third quarter net income of $23.3 million on net sales of $370.7 million, a 12 percent increase in earnings and an 8 percent increase in revenues over the same period last year. Net income for the third quarter, 1972, was $20.8 million on net sales of $342.2 million. Earnings per share are 82 cents for the quarter compared to 72 cents for the same period a year ago.

* * *

Henry E. Carter

Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc. has finalized its agreement to acquire for cash the business and assets of Gulbransen Industries, Inc., manufacturers of electronic organs. The Chicago-based company (with production facilities in Hoopeston, Illinois) will be a unit of CBS Musical Instruments, a division of the CBS/Columbia Group, but will continue to operate independently under its present management. Henry E. Carter is Chief Operating Officer of Gulbransen.

Record News

Columbia Masterworks has announced the signing of violinist Jaime Laredo and pianist Ruth Laredo (husband and wife) to an exclusive contract . . . Paul Simon struck gold for the second time in recent months with "Love Me Like a Rock" . . . And a seventh gold record for the Isley Brothers – "That Lady (Part 1)" . . .

Columbia Records Special Products is releasing a series of twelve collectors' items – Theater/Soundtrack re-issues, some of which have been selling for as much as $25 per copy on the collectors' market. The albums, complete with dialogue from the musical comedies, include original Broadway cast recordings of "The Most Happy Fella," "First Impressions," "Do I Hear a Waltz," "Dear World," "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn" and "My Fair Lady." . . .

CBS Records Germany celebrated its tenth anniversary with the announcement of three major signings: Switzerland's Paola; the Austrian group, the Milestones; and composer/producer Achim Thiermermann, who will be the company's A&R representative in Munich. In addition CBS Records will distribute the new label PROM, which records the popular French singer Mike Brant.

Alcoholism

The incidence of alcoholism at CBS is low, but the Company has long recognized the disease as an illness and offered its medical services and full support to employees dealing with the problem. Now CBS has extended its Comprehensive Medical Insurance Plan to cover the cost of alcoholic rehabilitation centers and clinics. To take advantage of the new coverage, an employee must be in an alcoholics' program, rehabilitation center or clinic approved in advance by CBS Medical. Anyone needing more specific information should contact his or her local CBS Medical office.

Honored

Mike Wallace, CBS News Correspondent . . . 1973 Distinguished Achievement Award in Broadcast Journalism from the University of Southern California School of Journalism and its Alumni Association.

Gloria Thomas, WCBS-TV Director of Community Affairs . . . the Southeast Community Association Community Service Award for promoting public awareness of the problems of New York City's disadvantaged.

Walter Cronkite, CBS News Correspondent . . . the National Press Club's first Fourth Estate Award honoring members of the journalistic profession.

WCAU-TV Newsroom's 10-part series, "The Junk Man: The Fight Against Drugs" . . . a special Pennsylvania State Senate commendation from State Senator Robert Rovner, who has introduced into the State Legislature a tough new drug law prompted by the WCAU-TV investigative series.

Norman A. Darer

Norman A. Darer, President of CBS Publications, the magazine and paperback division of CBS, died on October 31, following a brief illness. Mr. Darer, 41, had been with CBS since 1959, moving from General Sales manager of CBS Radio-FM, to Associate Director of Corporate Planning, to Vice President of Planning and Development for the CBS/Education & Publishing Group. In 1972, he became President of CBS Publications. The many who knew him will undoubtedly share the feelings expressed by CBS President Arthur R. Taylor: "Wherever he passed throughout his career, Norman Darer made his mark. He will be sadly missed."

Jennifer Alward

Judy Beck

Patricia Bernie

Ron Bookman

J. William Grimes

Sylvia Hughes

John Lack

Jay Gold

Lawrence Moberg

Robert Sherman

Andrew Subbiondo

Theodore Sullivan

Moving Around

Robert Alaburta to Financial Analyst, CRI . . . *Jennifer Alward* from Administrative Assistant, Hollywood, to Program Editor, Program Practices, New York, CTN . . . *James Avila* to Editor, News, KCBS, CRD . . . *Judy Beck* to Manager, Manufacturing, HRW . . . *Patricia Bernie* to Rome Bureau Manager, CND . . . *Clare Blessinger* to Supervisor, Accounting, CRI.

Ron Bookman to Editor-in-Chief, *World Tennis* magazine, PUB . . . *Ed Bonuso* to Manager, Budget Administration, Marketing, CRU . . . *Richard Carr* from Senior Accountant, Vale Technical Institute, CES, to Audit Trainee, FIN . . . *Fred Cockerill* to Associate Director, Marketing Administration, CRU . . . *Rodsin DeMesa* to Accountant, CRI . . . *Bonnie Garner* to Director, Contemporary Music, Nashville, CRU.

Jay Gold to Director, Accounting, FIN . . . *J. William Grimes* to Vice President, General Manager, WEEI-AM, CRD . . . *Katherine Haener* from Desk Assistant, News, to Producer, News, KCBS, CRD . . . *Patricia Henry* from Administrative Assistant to Associate Research Manager, Economics and Research, CBG.

Sylvia Hughes to Manager, Rating Services Radio, Economics and Research, CBG . . . *John Lack* to General Sales Manager, WCBS-AM, CRD . . . *Rudy Lambino* to Marketing Analyst, CRU . . . *Cleveland Lamm* to Manager, Teletype Services, FAC . . . *Paul Magno* from Supervisor, Accounts Payable, CND, to Benefits Coordinator, FIN . . . *Robert McRoy* from Order Service Supervisor, CRU, to Placement Manager, PER . . . *Mary McVeg* from Secretary to Foreign Language Editor, Rinehart Press, HRW . . . *Keith Meehan* from Supervisor, Employee Services, FIN, to Supervisor, Accounts Payable, CTN . . . *Karen Mender* from Secretary to Publicity Assistant, General Books, HRW . . . *Rosamond Mitchell* to Accounts Receivable Supervisor, CLD.

Lawrence Moberg from Director, Planning and Administration, School Department, HRW, to Director, Corporate Analysis, FIN . . . *James Parham* from Scheduler to Account Executive, KNXT, CTS . . . *Wendy Scarlet* from Secretary to Manufacturing Assistant, HRW . . . *Frances Scurachio* from Supervisor, Proofreaders, to Traffic Supervisor, Creative Services, CHD.

Robert Sherman to Vice President, General Manager, Radio Spot Sales, CRD . . . *Richard Silverman* to Associate Director, Survey and Data Services, CND . . . *Lorraine Slaten* to Sales Analyst, WCBS-TV . . . *Andrew Subbiondo* to Vice President and Controller, CRD . . . *Theodore Sullivan* to Vice President, CBS/Columbia Group.

Wesley Swint from Administrator, WCBS-TV, to Commercial Editor, CTN . . . *Eugene Wetzel* from Clerk to BMIS Manager, KMOX-TV, CTS . . . *George Williams* from Senior Clerk to Coordinator, Promotion and Information Services, CRI . . . *George Wilson* to Director, Research and Planning, BFA.

Correction: We knew it had to happen sometime. Last month we criss-crossed two names and faces in Moving Around. Our apologies to: Elizabeth Wellman and Anita Kopff.

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COLUMBINE

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Reminiscing With a Blues Man

There's a scene in "Lady Sings the Blues" in which a white band leader hears an 18-year-old Billie Holiday in a Harlem bar and invites her to go on tour with his band – the beginning of Billie Holiday's career. In real life, the man behind that meeting of Benny Goodman and Billie Holiday was John Hammond – then an American record producer for the English Columbia and Parlophone Labels as well as the first serious critic of jazz. Now, at 62, Hammond is Vice President, Label and Talent Acquisition for Columbia Records.

Credited with having made jazz and swing happen, Hammond is also widely respected for his ability to take a not-yet-popular stand and stick with it until the rest of the world catches up. He espoused the cause of blacks in the '30s and '40s, decades before the idea of civil rights was fashionable; at the onset of the sixties, he steadfastly ignored those who referred to a new, raspy-voiced young folk singer he'd found as "Hammond's folly." Today, "Hammond's folly" is otherwise known as Bob Dylan.

In this interview with *Columbine*, Hammond talks about some of the early days of jazz, about his efforts to preserve through re-issues this authentically American musical heritage, and about some of the Columbia artists he feels are worth watching, and listening to, today.

* * *

Columbine: What is it like for you to operate in such a youth-oriented business?

Hammond: Well, I'm an old blues man, but it's incredible to me how much of today's music grows right out of the blues. I've been listening to Robert Johnson records since 1936. There's been a lot new since. But there hasn't been anything better.

Columbine: Robert Johnson was a blues singer?

Hammond: Yes. Not that many people know about him because the only records he ever made were recorded in a San Antonio hotel room in 1936 and '37. He was killed in 1937.

But he was possibly the greatest male blues singer there ever was. And the only sexy one. I mean, there was a guy who turned on every chick in the South who heard his records.

We've got two Johnson albums in the Columbia catalogue now, and we're doing another one this winter.

Columbine: Does his sound still make it?

Over more than three decades, Columbia's John Hammond has been a major force in the careers of innumerable recording artists – among them Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, and Bob Dylan.

Hammond: Yes. Even with the constricted sound quality that comes from recording in a hotel room, the artist still comes through.

Columbine: Columbia has also done a re-issue of Billie Holiday, which I imagine you had a lot to do with. How did you meet her?

Hammond: I first heard her in 1933 in a gin mill uptown. I got terribly excited about her and I eventually got Benny Goodman up there to listen to her. Then Benny did a recording with her in '33, and that was the beginning.

Columbine: What was it that made her seem so exciting when you heard her?

Hammond: She was so far ahead of her time. She approached music like an instrumentalist and even though she didn't know how to read music, she had an instinctive sense of how to phrase. It was just some magic she had. And she was always incredibly stimulated to improvise by the accompaniment behind her – which was tough, since in the early days from about 1935 to 1940 all the music Billie sang to was "jammed" – no pre-arrangements. I don't know any other singer who did, or could have, worked that way.

Columbine: Do you think her records do justice to her sound?

Hammond: Unfortunately, the studios Billie recorded in at 1776 Broadway were close to the worst in history. When we did our re-issue . . . well, all I can say is that we've got genius engineers who have devised all sorts of ways of using two channels, excluding all the surface noise, and yet preserving the original sound ratio. What they have done electronically on these records – without messing with their honesty – is unbelievable.

Columbine: A few years ago Columbia re-issued all of Bessie Smith. Did that involve the same kind of complicated engineering?

Hammond: There were about 175 splices on just one selection of a Bessie Smith re-issue because we kept going from one old disc to another (from private collections) just to get the best, clearest, least scratchy version of each phrase. Putting together the re-issue took three years! But the sound quality on Bessie Smith's records was much better than on Billie's to begin with – something Bessie Smith and her manager made sure of when they first recorded them. If the two of them didn't approve of a master, didn't think it was good enough, they ordered it destroyed.

Columbine: Were you there 30 years ago when they did that?

Hammond: Yes. I supervised Bessie Smith's last session here at Columbia in '33. But the point I'm making is that every record that the two of them let go through was good. That's why we re-issued every single side of Bessie Smith that existed. No company had ever done that with any artist before. With most artists – even Billie Holiday – a third or half of what they've done just isn't worth preserving.

Columbine: Why do you think there's such an interest in Bessie Smith now?

Hammond: Janis Joplin claimed that Bessie Smith was her great inspiration, and I think that Janis's interest got other young people interested and buying her.

Columbine: Did you like Joplin?

Hammond: Yes. I liked her. There aren't many good blues singers today. A good blues singer has to have lived in order to be believable. I mean they've got to pay dues.

Janis did live and she paid a lot of dues. So did Aretha Franklin. I still think Aretha is a great artist even though we lost her to Atlantic.

Columbine: How did Aretha come to your attention?

Hammond: Some song writer came in with a "demo" tape of his songs and one was called "Today I Sing the Blues." The

(continued on page 2)